

Newspeak

It started way back in the eighties, with the Stay Free maxi-pads. At least, that's what they said on this TV documentary I saw once. How could you tell people to protect their freedom when they thought you were talking about feminine hygiene products? I mean, you still had the words, of course, it wasn't Orwellian or anything, they didn't take away the words, they just "added" new meanings to them. Particular kinds of meanings. And who really wanted to use them after that? It made the whole idea of freedom seem kind of dirty.

We don't have freedom either, of course. Freedom lasted a little longer, before finally dying out in the late nineties when the name was taken by that pornography download software. I mean, try telling some guy in the street you're just trying to protect your freedom. I've tried! He laughs and then he makes some sort of obscene sexual pantomime. Makes it kind of hard to be an activist.

Activist took a little longer. Companies bought out the core concepts before they moved to the little stuff like us activists. Activist was what they called it when they privatized the sewer system in the late 2000s. "Activists are shit," you used to hear the right-wingers say. Now they don't even need to say it — it's in the dictionary.

So when I recruit kids I can't tell them what they'd be. Saying they'd be activists is straight out, obviously. But I can't even tell them we do protests. Protest is what they call it when you call AAA when your car breaks down. Kids don't want to go around fixing broken cars. They're not big on protests.

Liberty quickly became the leading brand of thong underwear. Control is the #2 online role-playing game. Rights are the new name for gift certificates. Democracy is the kind of M&Ms where you get to pick the color. ("Geez man, we all like chocolate, but you're taking things a bit too far," is what the kids say when I tell them we need to fight to protect democracy.)

It's like a nightmare version of *Intelligence* (or, as it used to be called, *Wheel of Fortune*). They bought up all my words.

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March 25, 2007